



# STATE SENATOR VANETA BECKER

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**SEN. VANETA BECKER**  
200 W. WASHINGTON STREET  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46204  
1-800-382-9467

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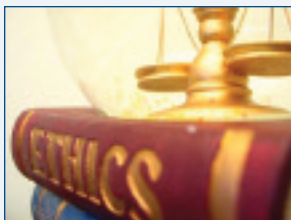
## SEN. BECKER: BILLS I SUPPORTED THIS SESSION

✓ **Child Support:** In an effort to collect more than \$2 billion in overdue child support payments, lawmakers passed a bill to withhold casino winnings from those who ignore their court-ordered obligations. The Indiana Department of Child Services estimates more than 165,000 "deadbeat parents" each owe more than \$2,000 in support payments. Colorado passed a similar law in July 2008, resulting in more than \$320 million in delinquent payments.

✓ **Ag Assessments:** Senate Enrolled Act 396 uses an adjusted rolling average that eliminates the highest assessed value over a six-year period. Known by economists as the "Modified Olympic Average" technique, the model should provide farmers and local governments more stable agricultural property assessments and be more representative of true market value.



✓ **Government Ethics:** Legislators passed comprehensive ethics reform legislation, which I co-authored, creating a one-year cooling-off period before a retired legislator could become a lobbyist and requiring uniform reporting by all lobbyists. The threshold for reported one-time lobbyist expenses drops from \$100 to \$50, with the annual total dropping from \$500 to \$250. Registration and reporting requirements now include legislative liaisons of state agencies and universities.



✓ **Rx Abuse:** Lawmakers supported a bill aimed at combating prescription drug abuse in Indiana. Senate Enrolled Act 356 expands the data collected by Indiana's prescription monitoring program (INSPECT) and allows INSPECT to release information on prescribers and patients to the state toxicologist, Medicaid fraud investigators and substance abuse assistance programs. This change should help better identify problem prescribers and "doctor shopper" patients in an effort to reduce prescription drug abuse.



# SEN. VANETA BECKER

SERVING SENATE DISTRICT 50 TAXPAYERS



## JOBS: LAWMAKERS FIGHT NEW SPENDING, NEW TAXES; PASS PRO-JOBS INITIATIVES TO HELP HOOSIERS

**W**ith little time and no money, lawmakers worked this short session to maintain Indiana's pro-job climate of low taxes and limited regulation.

Senators kept a close, careful eye on proposed legislation and amendments to avoid new state expenditures and government intervention that would have raised taxes and imposed red tape during already hard times for Indiana's workforce and employers.

Gov. Mitch Daniels, with the support of Senate Republicans, rightly reacted to tumbling state revenues by cutting government spending, flat-lining state payrolls and freezing all but essential hiring. To date, state bureaucracies have cut 20 percent from operating budgets. Reluctantly, higher education funding has been reduced 6 percent and public K-12 schools – nearly half of the state budget – have been asked to find 3 percent in new cost savings and efficiencies to help save classroom teachers' jobs.

Senate Enrolled Act 23 delays \$400 million in new unemployment insurance premiums from going into effect in 2010. By

avoiding premium increases, lawmakers hope employers large and small will be in stronger positions to retain or add employees.

Lawmakers also passed initiatives to help Hoosiers recover from the national recession:



- **New Employer Tax Credits** will be offered to businesses relocating or incorporating in Indiana. Qualified businesses must hire 10 or more full-time employees, not including owners.

- **Small Business Tax Credits** will be expanded to make small employers with fewer than 35 workers eligible for Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) credits.

- **Small Business Ombudsman** will be an advocate for small employers with state agencies, helping navigate regulations, streamline paperwork and coordinate due dates. Also, the ombudsman will monitor outdated, ineffective and overly burdensome reporting requests and red tape.

- **H.I.R.E.** (Helping Indiana Re-start Employment) initiative will offer tax incentives to employers who hire and train unemployed and underemployed Hoosiers.

## Lawmakers Give Schools Funding Flexibility, More Local Control

**L**awmakers this session provided schools more financial flexibility and local control. We also took steps to address social promotion of students not reading at grade level.

Giving local school corporations greater ability to address funding challenges and meet the educational needs of Hoosier students are key goals of House Enrolled Act 1367.

Under this new law, schools can claim up to 5 percent of funding normally dedicated to capital projects and use it for instructional purposes. Schools agreeing to pay freezes for staff, with exceptions for built-in raises based on experience and new degrees, can use up to 10 percent.

This measure will provide access to nearly \$82 million statewide to help prevent teacher layoffs and preserve instruc-

tional programs. By allowing them to tap into these funds, HEA 1367 helps schools address budget cuts and avoid new taxes on Hoosiers.



This legislation also requires schools to develop a plan to protect instructional programs, including provisions for students who are deficient in reading. Input will be sought through public hearings.

To avoid additional costs and provide more local control, Senate Enrolled Act 309 gives schools the option to continue budgeting on a January 1 – December 31 calendar or change to the state's fiscal July 1 – June 30 calendar. Without this new flexibility, many schools would have to pay for more training and equipment during already difficult financial times.